PEAKS OF SHALA

cliffs or passed the ends of smaller mountain ranges that ran down to the opposite banks of the Lumi Shala. There were villages over there; we saw them built against the mountains like clumps of gray swallows' nest—the villages of [376] Shoshi, with whom Shala was in blood. At the foot of the waterfall streams that dashed down their cliffs we saw now and then a little mill, flooded with water, its roof of slate hardly showing above the flood, where in drier season Shoshi ground its grain or put the loosely woven white woolen cloth to be soaked in the running water and pounded by paddle wheels until it shrank into the feltlike fabric that makes their garments.

[233] 246 Here and there a red-brown or gray-white moving patch at the foot of a clump of mangled trees announced that a little shepherd was there, clinging to a tall stump and cutting twigs to throw down to the goats and sheep; we were too far away to see him. And there were other clumps of trees green with uncut leaves; always near these we saw, bronze brown among the gray rocks, structures taller than a man and shaped like a beehive. These were trees that the axes spare until the leaves are fully grown and filled with sap. Then the branches are cut and piled in a circle, the cut ends outward and the leaves to the center, layer upon layer, until the beehive shape is completed, when they are weighted down with rocks. The leaves dry, remaining green and nutritious, and slowly through the winter the curious silos are demolished armful

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

by armful and carried into the houses to be fed to the sheep and goats.

The sky was still a leaden gray, with darker clouds moving sluggishly among the mountains, and the air still seemed more than half full of falling water. The soaked rawhide opangi were like soft rags on my feet; at every step my woolen stockings emptied and filled with water like sponges, and all our fingers were shrunk in ridges from the long wetting. But we were gay, we sang along the way, the weak little songs that so amused the steel-lunged mountaineers, and when a low growl of thunder and a flicker of fire among the clouds announced a stronger onslaught of the rain, Perolli waved his hand toward the mountain tops and joyously shouted something—we thought, to the effect that we were not flowers.

"*Dranit?*" said I. "Great Scott! do you need announce that we aren't flowers? Shout that we are not drowned puppies, if you want to startle onlookers."

"Not *dranit—drangojt,*" Perolli corrected. "I said to the dragon he may growl as he likes; we're not drangojt."

"No," I said. "No, we aren't. But what aren't we?"

"Drangojt," replied Perolli, and broke into careless song. There were times when I could have boxed that young man's ears, for nothing is more irritating than a sense of humor which is not yours. And the Albanians have a sense

10:Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EG1 Albania EG1

CHAPTER X

PASTURAGE

233 Mountainous northern Albania is largely a pastoral country with large flocks of sheep and goats and considerable numbers of plough-oxen, cows and horses.

To a great extent the nature of a village's pasturage depended on its position, whether it was in the shrub zone, the oak zone or higher up among the pine and beech forests of the alpine slopes. In the low-lying belt of shrublands the poorest type of grazing was found, and here the pastoral life was seen at its lowest level. A poor man might have only one to five sheep, a cow or, where foliage was more plentiful, a few goats. Most villages had little or no pasturage proper and the animals grazed on the verges of paths and fields, in small spinneys and in the waste spaces overgrown with shrubs. Each family would do its own herding, the animals being tended by the old people and by small boys and girls. For security against thieves and wolves the animals were brought home at night to the little farmyard with its low stone wall, or to a stable under the living rooms of the farmhouse. The low altitude of such holdings, where the climate was neither too hot in summer nor too inclement in winter, ensured fairly constant grazing all the year round. [246] During the winter, however, when the daylight hours were fewer, a meagre sheaf of maize and, less frequently, wheat straw or chaff, was fed by hand to each animal on its return from the open. When wheat chaff was fed to a horse it had to be well damped with water or the horse would not touch it. As for the goats, they would be given an armful of dried leaves which had been cut and stacked by the men in autumn and carried into the house by the women. No grain feed and no roots were fed to the animals; the former was needed for human consumption and no root crops are grown in Albania. Occasionally, however, when oats of a very poor quality were grown, the grain as well as the straw was fed to the animals. Albanians were astounded to learn that the British eat porridge. 'Food for animals' they would exclaim at the sight of a packet of porridge oats.

Poor and insignificant as they were, these small owners were

10: Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

so numerous that their livestock amounted to a considerable percentage of the total in Albania. They were found mostly in the shrub areas, though a few very poor men lived also in the oak zone. But the vast majority of this leafy belt herded their flocks on a larger scale. Above each village there was always the overhanging mountain with its forests of beech and pine to hold the waters and keep the pastures green and sweet. Under the higher beech trees no grass grew, but in the sloping clearings the animals could graze at will. In winter, however, these clearings were too high to permit of habitation; besides, such tilling of the soil as did take place occurred at roughly the same level as the village, and it was there that the flocks found most of their feeding. In summer the fields and meadows, whether open or enclosed, provided hay for the animals; in the autumn the stubble served for a few weeks; while in winter they wandered over the grass. In spring the winter-sown wheat was improved by being eaten down a few inches by the sheep. Dried leaves from the numerous oak trees supplemented this winter feeding.

Sometimes the number of animals was such that all these sources did not suffice during the lean months, or sometimes a village had no suitable winter pastures or had lost them for political reasons. Many animals would then be slaughtered at the commencement of winter and the meat smoked or salted down, while the remainder lived to fare as best they could. The many owners who could not afford meat, fresh or salted, had to try to maintain their livestock until the spring. By that time the poor creatures were no better than living skeletons hardly able to walk out to the pastures.

On the long coastal plains and marshy river banks the owners of large flocks and herds were scorched out of their pastures in summer or plagued by the mosquitoes from the marshy swamps. This necessitated a wholesale migration at the beginning of summer to the cooler alpine slopes, a feature of Albanian life as characteristic as picturesque.

A few of the purely winter pastures belonged to the State, a few to private persons, and the immense majority to some community, either a tribe, a village or a village ward. State-owned pastures dated from Turkish times and were consequently found only on the plains near big centres, as Turkish control had little reality elsewhere. Examples of these were the forested swamps of Mamuras and the Highland village of Gurrëzë on the left bank of the river